

What Should We Be Doing?

by Richard C. Nickels

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest,”
Ecclesiastes 9:10.

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Acknowledgments

I praise the Eternal for the precious Truth He has revealed.

I appreciate the teachings of Herbert W. Armstrong, who helped me understand many Biblical Truths.

Important Scriptures

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,”
I Corinthians 12:7.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,” **I Corinthians 15:58.**

“In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury,”
Proverbs 14:23.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot be zealous therefore, and repent,” **Revelation 3:15, 19.**

“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little. Do what you can.” — Sydney Smith

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What Should We Be Doing?

INTRODUCTION

Our articles are written to share and preserve Biblical Truths, address problems in the Church, counteract doctrinal errors, and inspire others, especially our family and friends. I owe a tremendous debt to others for everything I have learned. Most articles we publish are the work of more than one person. These studies have “bled” with red ink marks several times!

Our miscellaneous Bible Studies have been published in our book, **Bible Studies**. Over the years, we have emphasized several major topics, which have been published separately. These include: **Biblical Holy Days, Biblical Law, Biblical Doctrine, Biblical Marriage and Family, Biblical Health and Healing, Church History, Basic Bible Study Tools, Book Reviews,** and **What Should We Be Doing?** Revised and expanded editions of these and others are being planned. As we write additional articles, they will be included in the next update. Except where noted, all articles are written by myself.

This publication includes articles on the subject of what we as individuals should be doing to spread the faith of our Savior the Messiah. All too often, believers are told that their responsibility is only to “pay and pray.” Don’t you listen to this swan song of a dead church! There are many things we, as lay people, should be doing to fulfill our Savior’s Commission to His disciples to go into all the world with the Good News, making disciples of all nations.

I have been condemned to hellfire by at least one prominent minister. The *audacity of a lay member* writing religious articles! However, I must write what is in my heart, as I want to share what I have learned with others. Let God be the Judge. I pray that the Eternal will use this small effort for Him, for His glory, and that He will forgive me of any unintentional errors contained therein. Read, and enjoy, always remembering to put into practice what you have learned.

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What Should We Be Doing?

This subject has been bothering me for a while now. There are some who don't believe we should be involved in **Giving & Sharing** or in trying to provide the Truth, in providing literature and material to others. They feel we are acting as a minister.

There are different gifts in the Church. **Ephesians 4:11-12** and **I Corinthians 12:28-31** state that God gave different gifts in the Church and there are gifts of healing, gifts of teaching, gifts of prophesying and all types of gifts that He gave and it doesn't necessarily say that it was given just to ministers. Of course, to be a minister, you have to have the gift of teaching, but just to have the gift of teaching didn't necessarily mean you were a minister. We shouldn't strive to be teachers, but there is nothing wrong with being willing to share what God has given us with other people.

One of the scriptures given to counteract this is **John 6:29**, the main scripture used by people to say "this is what we are to be doing." It says, "Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." This is given as a reply whenever you ask "should we be doing a work?" or "shouldn't there be some type of work carried on to publish the truth or provide it to others, or preach the gospel or do something?" This has been the standard answer from three different groups that we have been associated with.

When you look at this term, "believe on Him" what does that phrase or clause, encompass? To believe on Him? Does it mean like most people, and even some that were in the true Church of God, that have gone the full circle from the Protestant belief of some groups that all you have to do to be saved is to believe on Jesus? There are many, many millions today who claim they believe on Him. They believe that He was the Son of God, that He died and was raised from the dead and is alive now, that He's going to save them, or has already saved them. So does it mean just to believe that He is the Son of God?

I think we are very well aware of **James 2:19**, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." So just belief is not enough, as many instances we know and can look up, that there are many kinds of people who believe that He was the son of God, the Messiah. The demons believe, the ones He cast out in one instance

said, "have you come to torment us before our time?" (**Matthew 8:29**). So they believe that He was the Son of God. Satan knew He was the Son of God. Notwithstanding **Luke 4:3**, he instills doubts in people.

James 2:14-20 says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

We don't show faith if we don't have works. If a brother comes to you and needs help, or if you know there are brothers who need food and clothing, and you turn them away, then you haven't shown true faith, because you haven't shown it by works. So in the same instance, if a brother comes to you and needs help, or if you know there are brothers out there who need help, isn't it more important really to help them if there is a spiritual need of spiritual food or spiritual help or spiritual reconciliation and comfort? Isn't it just as important to reach out and try to help someone that way? I don't see how you can separate one from the other. If a brother needs help whether spiritually or physically, we must do it, **Jude 21-23**.

John 3:17-21 shows that deeds are a major part of belief. Righteousness is defined in **Psalms 119:172** as "all thy commandments." So to believe on Jesus Christ and do His work involves a whole lot more than just believing He was the Son of God. **John 3:36**, "He that believeth [Greek *pisteuo*, 'has faith'] on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth [Greek *apeitheo*, 'obeys'] not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth in him."

Hebrews 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please God. **John 14:12-14** says that the works the Savior does, he that

believeth on Him shall also do even greater works. **Verse 15**, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." If you say you believe on someone, but deny everything they say and call them a liar, and you won't do anything they ask you to do, then you don't really believe on that person. To believe on Jesus Christ is to believe the Word of God. He was (and is) the Word of God, **verse 21**.

In **I John 3:22-24** it shows that he who keeps His commandments dwells in Him. **Matthew 5:17-19** says that Messiah did not come to destroy the law. Yet worldly churches think He did! They say He lived the law for us so we don't have to fulfill it, He fulfilled it for us. But that is not what He said, **I John 5:10-12**. **Galatians 2:20** says that Christ is living in us. **Hebrews 13:8** shows that He doesn't change. The Church is the body of Christ. We are to be walking in the same steps that He walked. What did He do the whole time He was here on the earth when He started out preaching and teaching? He taught and published the Truth of God. He tried to share it with other people, to anyone that would listen, to those that had ears to hear, and eyes to see. So we should be willing to share it, and if anyone wants to listen to it, that's fine. Hopefully some of the brothers and sisters and people that God is calling will hear, and respond to the Truth.

Romans 10:14-15 says, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Jesus Christ brought the good news of the Kingdom of God, and the message of our Savior who died and was raised to life, so that we can have our sins forgiven and be resurrected in the future. Jesus Christ came and taught these things.

In **Matthew 28:18-20**, He commanded us to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." So if He were just talking to the disciples then, the end of the age would have already occurred. In **John 17:9-26** it shows a continuous fulfillment of this, **verse 20**, "them also which shall believe on me through their word [the disciples' teaching]." He was talking of those that shall believe

because of the disciples. We believe because of them. It's been progressive, all down through the centuries. The Truth has been raised up and passed on through the years. Read also **John 15:1-15**.

We should be glad that the disciples did not have the same feeling that some have today, that we shouldn't be do anything right now except obey God and develop the character we need to qualify to be in the kingdom. We should be doing these things, BUT at the same time we should have a giving and serving attitude that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In one case, the Apostle Paul said that some had let down and wouldn't work any more, waiting around for something to happen. Many First Century believers thought Christ was going to return in their lifetime, and they let down, like some in our age have done. Paul said if they wouldn't work, neither should they eat. If all the people had sat around and thought that, where would we be today?

We've got to want to publish the Truth, to share it with others and not worry about pain and suffering when people come along and pretend, or for whatever reason they cleave with flatteries, **Daniel 11:34**, and then fall away when the going gets tough. But we shouldn't let that get us down and cause us to cease wanting to share and help others. We should always be willing to give an answer of the hope that is within us, **I Peter 3:15**.

In many cases, David, who was not a Levite or priest, talked about how zealous he was in wanting to proclaim God's Truth. In **Psalms 108:3** he said, "I will praise Thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations." **Psalms 119:46**, "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." **Psalms 96:3**, "Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people." **Psalms 66:16**, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." If someone doesn't fear God, they aren't going to obey Him. If God is not calling them, they won't pay attention to what you say, or they will want to get away from it. We should leave the matter in God's hands. We should at least make the Truth available, to the best of our ability, and try to preserve it for our children, and for anyone else who wants to learn it. **Psalms 51:10-13**, "Create in me a clean heart O God... then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." **Psalms 30:9**, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to

the pit? Shall the dust preserve Thee? shall it declare Thy Truth?" Many scriptures show that David was zealous, on fire. We should be zealous also, to promote God's Truth.

I'm not saying we should go out and stand on the street corners and knock on doors, or even get on the radio, because I'm no speaker and I don't know anyone else that is, who holds to the Truth. But there are people that have gifts, that can make tapes, that can write articles, that can talk or teach and help. **Psalms 9:11**, "Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people His doings." So there's nothing wrong with proclaiming the wonderful God we believe in and the Truth that is His. And we shouldn't be ashamed or afraid if someone finds out that we observe the Sabbath. I don't believe I should go out and preach it to my neighbors. At the same time, we shouldn't go around hiding, trying to keep it to ourselves. When they ask a question, we shouldn't be afraid to answer. We should try to serve and help answer their questions from the hope that is within us. We shouldn't try to hide our light, **Matthew 5:13-16**. If we are not the salt of the earth, then we have lost our savor, and are good for nothing, and should be cast away.

Acting like ministers? A minister is one who serves. Aquilla and Priscilla privately taught and helped Apollos who was preaching and didn't have the full Truth, **Acts 18:24-26**. Apollos didn't get upset, but rejoiced in it. **Ephesians 4:4-13** shows that "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. In **I Corinthians 12:7**, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." There are different gifts. Not everyone can preach, or lay hands on, or prophesy. Not all the prophets in the Old Testament were Levites, but in many cases the prophets or the kings were used by God, who prophesied through them, like He did through David.

Acts 8:4 shows at the time of Saul's persecution against the Church, "they (the believers) that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." These were not the apostles, **verse 1**. Nothing says they were all ordained ministers preaching. The church was scattered, and they preached. Philip went preaching in Samaria, **verse 5**. Yet, he was ordained a deacon (server) but nowhere is it stated he was ordained to be an evangelist. He just went and preached.

Mrs. Runcorn did a very big service when

she showed Mrs. Herbert Armstrong the truth of the Sabbath, by just sitting with her and pointing out the Scriptures, and letting her read them herself. That lady did a very big service.

What if she would have refused to answer questions, where would the Church have been? (Herbert W. Armstrong did more to promote the Sabbath and Holy Days and more of the Truth of God than anyone in our age. He came to the Truth through his wife who was led to it by Mrs. Runcorn.) God could have raised up someone else, but someone had to teach.

I believe that if we have God's Spirit within us, that it will cause us to want to do that, and if we do not share the Truth, we could be in danger of quenching the Spirit. If we sit back and force ourselves to fight against the urging to help others, serve others, teach others, and be a profitable servant, we could become guilty of stopping the Holy Spirit.

Mark 9:38-50. (Here is a case of someone performing a miracle in the Savior's name, but who was not "authorized" to do so.) Jesus said, "he that is not against us is on our part." He didn't condemn this person for what he was doing. In one part in Israel's history there were about four or five true prophets that were sent to speak or give messages. So it's not true that in every age there is just one person chosen by God, that has total responsibility and he is answerable to God and if you don't follow that one person you are lost.

Ezekiel 34:1-12 is a prophecy against ministers who feed themselves and not the flock. None seem to seek and search for the scattered sheep. This slaps in the face some ministers today because they have the idea "we will sit here and he that comes to us and acknowledges us as the only ministers we will help only them." The shepherd (minister) should physically and spiritually care for the flock, just as a shepherd takes care of the sheep first, and then feed himself.

It's very plain that the ministers should be seeking out, trying to find the lost one. Of course, most probably will not respond. Yet if only one person would respond, get back to the faith once delivered, get his feet back on the ground, it would be worth it all. You can't put a dollar value on that or any value whatsoever, to help them regain eternal life.

We should be doing more than we've been doing. I've felt guilty about it for years and I want to be a part of helping and trying to promote God's Truth as much as possible.

— adapted from a Bible Study by Ronald H. Stewart.

Ω

Study No. 76

The Little Sabbath-Keeping Red Hen

The little Sabbath-keeping red hen found a kernel of Bible understanding. She was very excited about this knowledge and went to her fellow believers to tell them.

“Who will accept this truth?” she asked. “Not I,” said the pig, “it would require too much sacrifice.” “Not I,” said the horse, “it would make me the laughingstock of all my friends.” “Not I,” said the cow, “our leading minister hasn’t accepted this teaching and I’d be put out of the church for heresy.”

The Little Red Hen was sorry at the reaction of her friends. “I will accept this Bible truth,” she said. And she did.

The little Sabbath-keeping red hen wanted to share this and other Bible truths with others. “Who will share the good news with the unconverted?” she asked. “Not I,” said the pig, “I pay tithes so the ministers can preach the gospel. You and I are not ministers, so we have no responsibility or authority to preach. Our job is to pay and pray.” “Not I,” said the horse, “there will be controversy and trouble with some that oppose the Truth. We could get ourselves killed.” “Not I,” said the cow, “I’m embarrassed to talk to others about religion. They might think we are crazy.”

Undaunted at the reaction of her friends, the Little Red Hen replied, “Then I will share the good news with the unconverted.” And she did.

A few people responded, which made the Little Red Hen very happy in spite of the fact that her friends didn’t seem to care. “Who will help these little ones grow in the Truth and mature in the Faith?” she asked.

Again the response was the same. “Not I,” said the pig, “I don’t want to get involved with weak people’s problems.” “Not I,” said the horse, “they might bring up some weird ideas.” “Not I,” said the cow, “they’ve had their chance; why didn’t they respond years ago?”

“Well,” said the little Sabbath-keeping red hen, “I’m going to help them along. I’m glad someone spent the time with me when I was new in the faith.” And she did.

Times got very difficult. There were food shortages, religious persecution, wars, disease epidemics, and frightening earthquakes, floods and storms. “Who will help the widows, orphans and poor?” the Little Red Hen asked. “Who will visit those unjustly put

in prison, and who will comfort the sick?”

“Not I,” said the pig, “I’m too poor to help others, and besides, I pay my taxes to finance government welfare programs. Let the government help them.” “Not I,” said the horse, “you can’t trust anybody. I can’t find anyone worthy of helping. There are only undeserving welfare cheats.” “Not I,” said the cow, “I’ll give to the Church and let them help the poor. I know they give no accounting for the poor fund. But that’s their responsibility.”

“Then I will help the widows, orphans and poor. I will visit the sick and unjustly imprisoned and persecuted,” the Little Red Hen said with a tear in her eye. And she did.

The little Sabbath-keeping red hen’s lifestyle was not pleasing to the totalitarian government that recently took over her country. Her friends, the pig, horse and cow, didn’t see anything wrong with taking a “harmless” little mark on their hands and foreheads. “Unless we take the mark, we can’t buy and sell,” they explained, “our families would starve, and God holds us responsible to provide for our families. Little Red Hen, you are too stubborn and Pharisaical!” Nevertheless, the Little Red Hen obstinately refused to submit to the totalitarian state.

Finally, the Little Red Hen was captured and given the ultimate choice: accept the mark and live; reject the mark and die. “You know my answer: I will serve the Almighty no matter what!” she shouted courageously. As she was marched to the guillotine, she cried out, “Who will deliver me?” A voice from Heaven suddenly boomed out: “I am your Heavenly Father! I will deliver you!” And He did.

Then, the conquering Messiah asked a question. “Who will enter into eternal life?” “I will!” chorused the pig, horse and cow. “NO!” the King of Kings said sternly. “You did not accept additional Bible truths. You did nothing to share the Bible truth you had with others. And you did not care for and love the brethren, and refused to help the poor and needy. You loved your life more than me. You’ve had your life. Now it’s at an end!”

“Come, Little Red Hen,” the Savior

smiled, “you did all these things. Come, enjoy the blessings of my kingdom.” “But I’m not worthy,” the Little Red Hen blushed, “I didn’t do enough. Thank you for having mercy unto such a little one as me! Yes, I will come.” And she did.

Summary and Conclusion

The children’s story of the Little Red Hen continues to make a great impression on me. It has a vital spiritual lesson. In the original story, the hen finds a grain of wheat, plants, cultivates, harvests the wheat, grinds it into flour and bakes bread. Her friends won’t do any work along the way. But they certainly want the results of the Little Red Hen’s labor, the end product, the bread.

I have adapted this story because I feel there are many professing believers who won’t do anything, but want the end product, eternal life. Salvation is a gift, but it is not a gift given to the do-nothing lazy person. The

profession (job) to which we have been called is not always “fun.” It is work, **hard work**.

Even the true Sabbath is a day of work! On the Sabbath, we do spiritual, not physical work. What better day than the Sabbath to perform works of righteousness such as those the Little Red Hen did. And yet some often turn the Sabbath into a lazy day of selfish rest for themselves.

Getting up out of bed early in the morning to pray and study, fasting to seek the Almighty’s will, overcoming personal sins and faults, helping spread the good news to others, working with and serving others: this is what every true believer is called to do, continually. Our walk with the Maker is not always, as they say, “a bed of roses.” There is much work to do.

Will we be like the pig, horse or cow? Or will we be like the Little Red Hen?

“Who will be a Little Red Hen?” I WILL!

How about you?

Ω

Study No. 79

Note: The “Red Hen” story is my favorite article. It has been published several times by Giving & Sharing and other organizations. I believe I wrote it in the 1980s, during a time when I endured fierce opposition for what I was doing in serving others through Giving & Sharing. One minister lambasted me for having the audacity to write religious articles and distribute them freely to the public, since at the time, I was not an ordained elder. His Church stated publicly that they were not an “information dissemination” organization. To this day, they are not.

On the other hand, one sees a nauseating continuation of the failed philosophy of lay members whose only function is to “pay, pray, stay, and obey.” Attend a large Feast of Tabernacles site, and you will see many hundreds of talented individuals who sit and listen to some speakers who are less than powerful. There are dozens of things these lay persons could be doing for God’s Work. Some of the designated speakers should sit down and be quiet, **I Corinthians 14:27-28**, and let the more gifted ones be the teachers.

If there is one message you can take to the bank, it is that God uses plain, ordinary, people, to do His work. I have been around a lot of evangelists, pastors, and elders, and some, but not all, think they are in a “special” class, above others. This is definitely not so. Perhaps the most shocking statement I ever heard uttered was when the Church’s leading silver-tongued radio evangelist screamed at me, that he was above the law. Not so. Every child of God has a unique role, a job, in the Family of God. We need to discover that job, and do it, with God’s help.

Let’s get busy in the work of the Lord!

An early 1920s *Bible Advocate* carried the following article, “A Dying Church,” written by O.R. Osman: “A Church that is doing nothing for the public is on its way to the cemetery. All its members who are doing nothing are acting as pallbearers. All who are so busy with their own affairs that they’ve no time to devote to the Lord’s cause are making the mourning wreath. The brother who says nothing at all is driving the hearse. The ones who are constantly drawing back when moves are to be made, are throwing flowers on the grave . . . **Brother, which of these acts are you performing?**”

What Are You *Doing* Spiritually?

Many Sabbath-keepers have been disillusioned or turned off by one or more organized bodies. Some have thrown out all or most of their former beliefs. Others are perplexed and hurt, the spiritual refugees of chaotic, strife-filled battles with their former affiliation. They may be still clinging to basic truths, but not knowing where to go or what to do. They are in need of a helping hand. It is to this latter group that I ask a vital question: **“What are you *doing* spiritually?”**

Before, it was so easy to pray for others to “do the work,” and to pay tithes to “God’s ministers” to do His Work. There was no question about where to go for Sabbath services. Now it is not easy at all. For what, or for whom, does one pray? Where does one invest God’s tithes? With whom does one fellowship? Suddenly, the “easy” questions are now very hard to answer.

For some, loyalty is merely switched from one group which “has all the truth” and is the “true church” to another group which claims the same things. I know such people, who view myself and others, as being outside the fold of God’s Church.

For others, there is an inward turning. Tithes are put in the bank and kept there, awaiting Elijah’s return. There is no fellowship with others, period. Personal beliefs are adamant and often out on strange tangents. This is a dangerous condition.

A few honestly attempt to maintain cherished beliefs, meet with others of like faith (not necessarily exactly, but certainly within bounds), and do what they can to encourage others to stay in the faith as well.

Several scriptures have motivated them to do something positive. **Matthew 25:14-30** gives the parable of the talents. The one who received only one talent did nothing. He put his tithes in the bank and stayed in his ivory tower. His returning Lord expected him to have done something, and cast this unprofitable servant away. **Matthew 24:42-51** describes the faithful and wise servant, who, when his Lord returns, is found to be doing his part in giving the Lord’s household meat in due season.

What should the profitable servant of God be **doing**?

(1) Seek and maintain **positive fellowship** with others of like faith. Without proper fellowship, you will die spiritually. Years ago, brethren thirsting for the truth would drive hundreds of miles for worthwhile sermons and

fellowship. Now, some won’t go across town.

(2) Maintain the “big four” spiritual habits of **prayer, fasting, study, and meditation**. You certainly are good for nothing unless you maintain your spiritual savor.

(3) Broaden your base of understanding through **correspondence** and sharing of ideas and comments with others. We need to get out of our spiritual ruts. Writing or phoning a distant brother can produce a life-stimulating bond, which refreshes both parties involved.

(4) **Use your spiritual gifts**. Remember, we are not all called to preach or write articles or make Bible Study tapes. Turn a hobby, occupation, talent, or ability into a worthwhile work of service for all, especially those of the household of faith, **Galatians 6:10**. Our Savior was a “man for others” and we should be also, continually serving the brethren.

The “Sabbath-Keepers’ Yellow Pages”

I’d like to compile a “Sabbath-Keepers’ Yellow Pages.” It would contain the names and addresses of many who serve others.

Under “Bibles & Religious Books” would be our activity, Giving & Sharing. We are a non-profit, mail order, religious bookstore, offering discounts on most Bibles and Christian books in print. Books have been my interest and aptitude. It is a pleasure as well as a responsibility to help others get their hands on Biblical study material at reasonable rates.

Earl Lewis, who manages the Giving & Sharing Bookstore, also conducts SEED, a tract ministry, which sends much literature to Sabbath-keepers around the world, including Africa and India.

Every member of the Church has a spiritual gift or talent that the Eternal expects to be used. Read **Romans 12** and **I Corinthians 12**. What a shame many professed believers do not use their God-given talents.

What are you **DOING** spiritually? **Ω**

Study No. 52

God Did Not Call Me to Preach

There are innumerable men, and even women, who publicly preach, claiming to be God's representatives and spokespersons. The public media is full of eloquent and polished speakers, and of pious-sounding preachers who seem to be so righteous.

Not being gifted as a speaker, I have sometimes admired those that are able to speak words smoother than butter, softer than oil. It is then that I need to get the true perspective from God's Word, that underneath, most, if not all, of these talkers are against God's truth, **Psalms 55:21**. We need to be on guard against those who speak peace but have mischief in their hearts, **Psalms 28:3-5**. Perhaps there is nothing so sweet as a woman preacher, but her end is as bitter as wormwood. Obviously, because she is violating **I Timothy 2:11-12** and **I Corinthians 14:34-35**, a woman preacher cannot produce good results.

So many have been taken in by smooth-talking ministers who preach for hire, that a bad name has been acquired by the whole group. Such false ministers have twisted God's doctrine into a lie, have served not Christ but their own belly, "and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," **Romans 16:17-18**.

Be on guard against eloquent speakers who deceive you with vain words, **Ephesians 5:6-7**. Beware lest any man should beguile you with enticing words, or philosophical arguments which seem true, because they follow the customs of men and receive human praise, **Colossians 2:4, 8, 18, 22-23**. Such vain talkers teach for money's sake and turn many from the truth, **Titus 1:9-16**. With feigned words (hypocritical, put-on clever arguments based on technicalities), they make merchandise of God's people (religion is a profitable business to them), **II Peter 2:1-3**. They talk about Christ, but deceive many, **Matthew 24:4-5**.

One of the marks of a false minister is that of speaking evil of other groups, other ministers, **James 4:11-12**. We are to lay aside such evil speaking, and not listen to it or be a party to it, **I Peter 2:1-2; Ephesians 4:30-31**. We are not even to speak evil of Satan, let alone other human beings! **Jude 8-10**.

They speak "great swelling words" and respect persons in order to gain the advantage, **Jude 16**. "They proudly boast about their sins and conquests, and, using lust as their bait,

they lure back into sin those who have just escaped from such wicked living," **II Peter 2:18, Living Bible**. "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily," **Psalms 73:8**. The ultimate in proud and lofty speaking will be the "little horn" who will have "a mouth speaking great things," **Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 11:36; Revelation 13:5-6, 11-18**. God will judge such wicked tongues, **Psalms 12:1-8**.

False ministers arise "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them," **Acts 20:30**, having "doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy [saying one thing, doing another]; having their conscience seared with a hot iron," **I Timothy 4:1-2**. "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them," **I John 4:5**.

But at the Messiah's return, there will be a sudden end of those that speak lies in the name of the Lord. These false ministers shall be ashamed of the lies they preached, and shall not claim to be inspired of God any more, **Zechariah 13:1-5**.

It is far safer now for men not to claim to be God's spokesmen. Better to be a meek individual like Moses, **Numbers 12:1-13**, who faithfully told the people what the Eternal told him to speak. He made no false claims. In fact, Moses told the Lord that he wasn't eloquent, but that he was slow of speech. But the Eternal was to be Moses' mouth, and used Aaron until Moses overcame his shyness, **Exodus 4:10-16**. Jeremiah complained that he couldn't speak well because he was so young, **Jeremiah 1:6**. But God put words in Jeremiah's mouth, **verses 7-10**. The Messiah correctly spoke the faithful words the Father had put in His mouth, **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**. But the self-appointed prophet who presumes to speak God's words in God's name or any other name shall die, **verses 20-22**, also **13:1-5, Jeremiah 14:13-15**. Unless God reveals His specific words to us, we had best remain silent and not presume to have new revelations, new truths!

Moses admitted that he was a man "of uncircumcised lips," **Exodus 6:12, 30**. That is,

without God's specific instructions and His Spirit, Moses' words would have no effect whatsoever. Isaiah said that he was a man of unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips, **Isaiah 6:5**.

True ministers of God, His Spokesmen, do not volunteer to speak God's words! They are like Amos, who was drafted and sent to speak the Eternal's words, **Amos 7:14-15**. False ministers speak words out of their own hearts; God did not speak to, or send them, yet they ran about preaching. If they had caused God's people to hear His words, then they would have turned the people from their sins, **Jeremiah 23:16-17, 21-22**. But instead they have prophesied lies in His name, **verses 11-14, 25-29**.

The apostle Paul was not an eloquent speaker, nor a handsome fellow. Although he wrote powerful letters, "his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible," **II Corinthians 10:10**. He was "rude in speech, yet not in knowledge," **II Corinthians 11:6**. Christ sent Paul, not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words or excellency of speech, but with the spiritual power of God, **I Corinthians 1:17-31, 2:1-10, 13**. Not in complexity or long technical arguments, but in simplicity and godly sincerity, **II Corinthians 1:12**, with "great plainness of speech," **3:12**, great "boldness of speech," **7:4**.

Having seen the prevalence of vain talkers deceiving the many, and the humility of the men of God who only spoke His revealed words, I must be frank and admit that God has not called me to preach His word. I do not need to arrogate the title of God's spokesman to myself. He hasn't called me to preach "thus saith the Lord." God's spokesmen have a "burden from the Lord," i.e., they must preach His words of warning or else they themselves will be held accountable, **Ezekiel 3:4-27**. I do not have this burden at this time.

True ministers of God must be called and sent by Him, not a human organization! **Romans 10:13-15; Acts 4:20, 5:19-20, 28-29, 8:26, 9:10, 10:19, 13:2**. That is why I do not seek "ministerial credentials" nor do I issue them to others.

The true body of the Messiah is comprised of those who have, and are being led by, the Holy Spirit, **I Corinthians 12:13**. Their names are written in Heaven, **Luke 10:20**, not on some computer or other records of an incorporated church body. The true church is guided by its head, Jesus Christ. It is not synonymous with a state or government-

recognized entity. You can't join my church (it's not mine, but the Eternal's), but you can become a part of it if you are called into it by the Almighty, **John 6:44**.

A called and chosen servant of God is either directly sent by Him, or through one of His other servants. Church elders are ordained by true ministers, **Titus 1:5**. They perform the functions of an elder: preaching and teaching, taking care of the church (**I Timothy 3:1-7**), anointing the sick for healing (**James 5:14-15**), preaching the gospel in all the world, baptizing those that believe, casting out demons, etc. (**Mark 16:15-18, Matthew 28:18-20**).

So many want to be a minister of God that they "volunteer" for His service! As we have seen before, this is a very dangerous practice and could result in one's eternal death! James said, "My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation," **James 3:1**. It doesn't matter how sincere you are, you will be judged by your works! Those who lie when they claim God sent them to preach when He didn't, are going to suffer a severe penalty, **Revelations 21:8**.

No, God hasn't sent me to preach publicly to the world. I'm sure I will be the first one to know, if He does decide to send me to do this very thing. Until then, what is my function? What is yours?

I firmly believe that the Eternal called me to live His way of life. Since my baptism in 1969, I have seen evidence in my life of God's Holy Spirit in action, of changes, of miracles, time and again. No believer who has this hope should ever be in doubt as to his own calling into God's truth, **James 1:5-7**.

I believe the ministers who baptized and laid hands on me had a remarkable degree of the truth of God. But since then, they and the church organization they represented, have severely departed from many of these basic truths, such as the Sabbath, Holy Days, trusting God for healing, faithful tithing, and belief and support for the sanctity and life-long permanence of marriage. Rather than following them in their downward path, I had to press on alone.

Through much prayer and study, I have come to believe that there are three things that God did call me, and probably most of you, to do:

(1) We are called to live the truth of God in a wicked and perverse world. We are to shine as lights, **Matthew 5:13-16, Philippians 2:15**. Every day, this becomes a more difficult

task as evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. We need God's calling and aid to accomplish this monumental mission. What a wonderful tool is the Sabbath to bring us back into line to our duty to God!

(2) We are called to help and encourage others to preserve the truth of God's way of life. Few people today really earnestly desire to keep the flame of truth burning in themselves and others. The work we do in writing articles and letters, and distributing Bibles and books through Giving & Sharing, is motivated out of the desire to serve other believers and help preserve the truth in these degenerate times. I do not intend to be an authoritative preacher in an attempt to convert or to sway others. It often happens that someone points out an error or omission in one of my articles that helps me to see the truth of the Bible more clearly. I appreciate these comments, as well as articles contributed by others. This sort of brotherly exchange is what **Malachi 3:16** means: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another [about God's word]." And also **Hebrews 10:24**, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Also see **verse 25**.

(3) We are called to hold fast, **Hebrews 10:23**. This means tenaciously clinging to the revealed truths of God, and growing in grace and knowledge of our Savior, **II Peter 3:17-18**. How many people do you know who have walked God's ways for a while, but let themselves slip away from the faith? To hold fast to the truths God gave me, I have to talk and write about these truths with others, and live them. Also, I need review and reinforcement through prayer, study, meditation, reading, writing, and listening. Holding fast means enduring to the end.

The Eternal may have me do other things someday. But right now, I have a full slate of duties. No, God did not call me to preach, but He did call me to live the truth, to preserve the truth and to hold fast to the truth. As surely as God sent Moses, Ezekiel or John the Baptist, He has sent me, and you, to do these things. Are we going to neglect this great calling, or will we instead be zealously about our Father's business?

Doing and Obeying the Law

Reconstructionist theologian Greg L. Bahnsen, in his book, *By This Standard: The Authority of God's Law Today* (1985: Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, Texas), says that "Heart-felt obedience to God law will lead us to promote obedience to that same law on the part of others" (page 35). Bahnsen quotes John Murray: "The least of God's commandments, if they bind us, bind others. We must resist the virulent poison of individualism which tolerates in others the indifference and disobedience which we cannot justify in ourselves The moment we become complacent to the sins of others then we have begun to relax our own grip on the sanctity of the commandments of God, and we are on the way to condoning the same sin in ourselves," *Principles of Conduct*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957.

If we are doing the right thing, we will as a natural consequence seek to help others do the right thing as well. Any other action is not a response of love.

Faith Results in Doing

Charles H. Spurgeon, 19th Century minister and prolific writer, wrote: "We trust God for good and then we do good. We do not sit still because we trust, but rouse ourselves, and expect the Lord to work through us and by us. We neither trust without doing, nor do without trusting," (quoted in *The Plain Truth* magazine, August, 1992, page 14).

Doing Scriptures

Read the Parable of the Sower, **Mark 4:14-20**. We cannot put our light under a bushel basket, **Mark 4:21-25**. We should publish the great things our Savior has done for us, **Mark 5:19-20**. A man healed by the Master disobeyed Him and published the Truth, **Mark 7:31-37**. Many today act as if Jesus had told them to keep quiet about His truth, when Christ hasn't told them to keep quiet! Let us not be ashamed of Christ, **Mark 8:34-38**. Ω
Study No. 58

It isn't what I *don't* understand about the Bible that bothers me; it's what I *do* understand.

What Should We Do? Where Should We Go?

We frequently receive letters asking us questions such as: “Where do you hold Sabbath services?” or “Where do you go for the Feast?” or “With whom do you fellowship?” We have been challenged many times for what we are doing. Here are answers to these questions.

After being a member of the . . . [organization] since 1968 I must say I don't understand your independent stand. Maybe you could help me with that. Where do you hold Sabbath services? Are there any near me? . . . I don't know where else to go Would it be possible to have a Giving & Sharing mail order bookstore in my area?

Another person asked, *What do you plan for the feast this year? While I seriously considered dropping out of the . . . [organization] earlier in the year or figured that I might be put out for opposing the D&R teaching, I am too thoroughly steeped in the ideas of 'where do you go', 'where do you pay your tithes', 'with whom do you fellowship', 'where will you keep the feasts?' etc. . . . Until things begin to clarify a little we will 'hang in there'.*

Answers to These Questions

We generally keep the Sabbath at home with our family, having a family Bible Study and Bible reading time. As the opportunity presents itself, we fellowship with others around the country who have similar beliefs. In recent years, once in a while we have attended Sabbath services with various organized Sabbath-keeping Churches of God, such as the United Church of God, Living Church of God, and Church of God, Seventh Day. Each year we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, and other Holy Days if possible, with other believers. We enjoy listening to cassette tapes sent out by various ministers. This may sound like a meager diet of spiritual fellowship. It is.

Giving & Sharing is NOT a tax dodge, some kind of guilt release mechanism, or a liberal, do-gooder organization trying to make the world a better place. Giving & Sharing's purpose is: (1) to distribute Bibles and religious books and articles to Sabbath-keepers at the lowest possible cost, and, (2) to promote the observance of Biblical doctrines: Bible Sabbath, Bible Holy Days, Biblical Law, Tithing, reliance upon the Almighty for Healing, observance of Bible Laws of Health, including

abstaining from Unclean Meats, non-observance of man-made holidays of pagan origins, promotion of the sanctity of marriage, and opposition to divorce and other sexual perversion.

Giving & Sharing is a tax-exempt religious organization, but not a Church. Besides myself, others direct Giving & Sharing activities such as writing and reviewing articles. Contributions (above the suggested donation for books) are welcome, though not solicited. Not a cent of contributions pays for salaries or personal expenses.

If I knew of an organized Church body that was faithfully teaching essential Biblical doctrines, I would join forces with them and Giving & Sharing would be unnecessary or auxiliary. We appreciate some of the work of other organizations, and read a variety of church literature that is often very helpful. We often recommend material from other groups, and seek to co-operate with others as much as possible.

Facing Tough Questions

I was put out of the Worldwide Church of God in 1975 because I opposed Divorce and Remarriage for any reason, as the Church continuously taught until it changed its doctrine in 1974. I do not agree with other doctrinal changes instituted, such as Sunday Pentecost and a watering down of the Sabbath, Healing, Tithing, etc. For a couple of years, I was part of another organization, Church of God, The Eternal, composed of ex-Worldwide Church of God people. The purpose of this new group was to continue to hold fast to the essential doctrines. When I discovered the new organization's leadership was following in the footsteps of the former organization, a separation became necessary.

People want a “life raft” when they are contemplating the abandonment of an organizational “ship.” We do not encourage anyone to leave an organization. They must make that decision for themselves. A hasty decision made for the wrong reasons could be damaging

to their eternal life. Many people become lost apart from an organized church. They could not continue keeping the Sabbath, and promoting Biblical truths in their family and others. It is not easy.

We wish that we had thousands of brethren to fellowship with, "like the good old days." In every case, God made it perfectly clear to us what we should do.

I recall vividly the last Feast of Tabernacles we observed in the Worldwide Church of God, at Squaw Valley, California, 1974. As I looked at the thousands of people, I wondered how it could have happened. A year earlier, many would have died rather than been unfaithful to their true mate for life. Now, most of these people had totally changed their thinking, responding lock step with the leadership's doctrinal changes. As I put my check in the Holy Day offering plate, I was cut to the quick. I didn't know what to do. I had personally witnessed gross financial corruption of the Almighty's Holy Tithes by this Church organization. Most of those who were leaving the Church at that time were throwing out all Bible truth, so there was no place to go. There was much good being done by this organization, much truth still being proclaimed, in spite of its imperfections. I prayed that God would use my little offering for His Holy purpose. Thankfully, the Eternal in His mercy brought the situation to a head a few months later. It was not my choice to leave the Worldwide Church of God. It was His.

My conscience would not allow me to actively support a church organization that teaches against major Biblical truths. I could overlook minor issues, but I had to decide which ones were major.

In my *History of the Seventh Day Church of God*, I wrote a statement that I did not know would apply to myself. In analyzing reasons for the decline in the power and numbers of the Church of God, Seventh Day, in the United States, I pointed to corrupt leadership. Then I said, "Individual hypocrisy has not been absent from the Church either. Many continue to believe in Feast Days, Anglo-Israelism and other doctrines yet continue to be a part of a Church which publishes articles against these beliefs."

I was a hypocrite. As long as I stayed there, I would have to passively keep my differences to myself. I couldn't be a zealous supporter of the organization. I either had to convince them that they were wrong, or they would have to convince me that I was wrong.

Often I asked myself, "Why do I feel that I am right and everyone else wrong?" I was driven to my knees beseeching God to correct and lead me. Many others agreed with me, but were passive and silent.

I understand the feelings of those who disagree vehemently against their own organization, yet mute their feelings and "hang in there." Each person should be fully persuaded in his own mind, **Romans 14:5**.

The Big Questions

These questions about "where can we go?" are only secondary questions. The Biblical question is "Lord, *to whom* shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," **John 6:66-69**. The true, dedicated, believer recognizes that organizations are humanly devised institutions, of themselves neither good nor bad. If the church leadership teaches gross error on major issues, and will not repent, and/or operates in a sinful manner, then don't wait to be put out. Leave at once. Words of eternal life do not come from a corrupt minister.

Why do you tithe? Is it to get an income tax deduction, or to do the work of spreading the Gospel? Would you continue to keep the Sabbath, and other Bible truths, even if you were the only one left on the face of the earth who was so doing? Do you attend Sabbath services or annual Feasts just for fellowship, or because of the spiritual nourishment? Isn't it wrong for you to be part of a church organization with which you disagree on major teachings?

The man who wanted to start a Giving & Sharing bookstore probably didn't know what he was asking. Does he want to volunteer 15-25 hours a week, year around, plus thousands of dollars of tithes to fund the work? If so, there is certainly a wide-open field ready to harvest. It requires work.

The big question is: "**What are we going to do?**" Are we going to give God's tithes to someone with whom we disagree? OR, are we going to have a direct part in preserving and perpetuating the sacred truths which we have received through others?

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," **Matthew 6:21**. Be either hot or cold. Don't be lukewarm.

"Life Raft" Available

We as individuals have a deep moral responsibility to help others, to pull them out

of the fire, when they can be helped, **Jude 22-23**. We ourselves need help from the One that is “able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,” **Jude 24**. Here is the only true life raft.

If you want someone to lean on, we are glad to help or refer you to someone who can help. Today’s prevalent spiritual sickness is lukewarmness. People do not care for others. They are rich and increased with goods, both spiritual and physical, and say they don’t need help from anyone. We need each other. We must, as Benjamin Franklin said, all hang together, or we will all hang separately.

Don’t Participate in Error

An Australian reader stated, *Some years ago I left the Worldwide Church not because of personal grudges... but because of changes in doctrine. I did over the years while attending the Church prove their doctrines, not once, but three times. Because of changes in doctrine I felt that I would neither support nor attend the church anymore, based upon the following scriptures (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19). I firmly believe that if one participates in error, knowingly, one is just as responsible as the person who introduces that error.*

Merely not participating in error is not good enough. One must actively promote the Truth, or he will lose what Truth he has.

Responding to Attacks

Some questions are personal attacks, such as these:

The G&S mailing list is an evangelistic activity, going to unconverted people.

This is not true, as we serve Sabbath-keepers, and none of our materials are geared to evangelism, converting the unconverted. The purpose of G&S material is to strengthen the converted in basic fundamental doctrines such as Sabbath, Holy Days, Marriage, Tithing, Health and Healing. However, if some of our material does go to the unconverted, and they accept God’s Truth, what is wrong with that?

When God wants an activity performed, He ordains a servant to do it. If that servant fails, God is responsible to replace him. We can’t just take an office that we think should be filled.

God has performed much work through

non-ordained servants, even women. An example is Aquilla and Priscilla. There are many periods of history where there have been few, if any, ordained servants of God. Nevertheless, the Church has continued as Jesus said it would.

There are many offices in the Church, **Ephesians 4:11, I Corinthians 12**, such as helps, governments [Amplified Bible: “administrators?”] and diversities of tongues. There is no indication that all these offices in the Church are ordained, nor are they all held by men! **Romans 16:1-2** tells of the minister Phebe, a woman, of the Church at Cenchrea. The word translated “servant” is Strong’s #1249, *diakonos*, usually translated *minister*. It means *servant* or *minister*, which is the same thing. Not all servants, *diakonos*, or the *diakonia* (ministry), are ordained, and not all are men! This fact in no way contradicts Biblical instructions that women are not to be in ordained teaching roles usurping ordained male elders.

Here are the usages of these related words:

Women serving the church: Martha, **Luke 10:40**; Phebe, **Romans 16:1-2**. Table servers, i.e., “deacons”: **Acts 6:1-2; I Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1**. Evangelists: Timothy, **Acts 19:22; I Thessalonians 3:2; I Timothy 4:6; II Timothy 4:1-5**. Apostles such as Paul, **Acts 12:25, 20:24, 21:19; Romans 11:13; I Corinthians 3:5; II Corinthians 3:6, 6:4; Colossians 1:23, 25; Ephesians 3:7; I Timothy 1:12**. Matthias, **Acts 1:17, 25-26**. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers do the work of the ministry: **Ephesians 4:11-15**. Christ: **Romans 15:8; Galatians 2:17**. Prophets: **I Peter 1:10-12**. False Ministers: **II Corinthians 11:15, 23**. Other individuals in the church: Tychicus, **Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7**; Epaphras, **Colossians 1:7**; Archippus, **Colossians 4:17**; House of Onesiphorus, **II Timothy 1:16-18**; Philemon, **Philemon 13**. Angels: **Hebrews 1:14**. House servants, servants of the king: **John 2:5, 9; Matthew 22:13**. Civil rulers: **Romans 13:4**. What Christ wants us all to be: **Matthew 20:26, 23:11; Mark 9:35, 10:43; John 12:26**. The work of the church in general: **Acts 6:4; I Corinthians 16:15; II Corinthians 4:1, 5:18, 6:3, 8:4, 9:1; II Timothy 4:11; Hebrews 6:10; I Peter 4:10-11; Revelation 2:19**. Charitable aid to the church: **Acts 11:29; Romans 15:3, 25; II Corinthians 9:12-13, 11:8**.

Each “ministry” is a unique gift of the Holy Spirit, **Romans 12:6-9**. There are

differences of “administrations,” i.e., *diakonia*, ministries, and they are not all the same, **I Corinthians 12:5-13**.

The scriptures indicate this last time is not to be a growth period.

This is an attempt to justify doing nothing, until God raises up a faithful minister. Put your tithes in the bank, don't share your beliefs with others, and “wait on the LORD.”

The true Church will be a little flock, **Luke 12:32**. When the Messiah returns, will He find the faith on the earth? See **Luke 18:8**. Yet, “the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many,” **Daniel 11:32-33**. “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when He cometh shall find so doing,” **Matthew 24:46**. Doing nothing is going to result in losing all you have, **Matthew 25:14-30**.

Writing articles is in the same category as preaching, on a tape or in person. You do them very well, but they need to be issued under the authority of an elder, as people did in WCG.

I have not found Biblical justification for the Giving & Sharing program, and your role of coordinator of its ministerial functioning On two occasions you have admitted to me the program is a ministry. You also

could not have non-profit status unless it was a ministry by IRS statutes.

We have consistently stated that G&S IS a ministry. I was ordained an elder in 1999. There is no contradiction in these statements! Psychologist Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family leads a large ministry, yet openly admits he is not an ordained minister, and that his work is not a church. G&S operates like he does. Dobson distributes books and material for suggested donations.

The Thyatira Church during the Middle Ages was commended for works of charity and ministry (service, *diakonia*). “Men, women and children made it their business to learn a little more each day, according to each person's ability. They ‘declared themselves to be resolved, with the Lord's help, to embrace, so far as their minds were capable of bearing it, the truth of Christ and of His bride If to any man more knowledge of the truth was given, then, they more humbly desired to be taught by him, and to be corrected of their mistakes’ (*Neander's Church History*, vol. 8, quoted from *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, Lesson 51, page 10).”

Every member of the Church has a definite part of the work of the ministry. **Ω**

Study No. 107

Personal Evangelism

Personal evangelism is a natural extension of being a good example. It is going one short step beyond shining as a light; it is simply verbalizing to friends, neighbors, co-workers, and strangers the blessings that come from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Of course, most of us don't find it very easy to take that one short step — so the more we can know about conversion and about evangelism, the more effective we will be in sharing our faith with others.

Progressive Nature of Conversion

We often think of conversion, the desired end result of evangelism, as an event that occurs at a single point in time. However, conversion is a process that can take many years. To be sure, accepting Jesus Christ as Savior is the climax, but consider how many steps a person must go through before he gets to that point:

1. To begin with, a person may have absolutely no concept of God, of life after

death, of sin, or of salvation.

2. A person comes to believe in a Supreme Being.

3. He comes to believe in life after death and learns the basic concept of God's plan of salvation.

4. He comes to recognize his personal need for salvation.

5. He is gripped with the conviction that he must do something about the Gospel, often as a result of personal suffering or frustration.

6. He repents and accepts Jesus Christ as

his personal Savior.

7. He is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit.

8. He begins the process of overcoming and growth as a Christian.

This process can take place very slowly or it can be compressed into a short period. Consider the conversion of the Apostle Paul. He was struck down on the road to Damascus and came to accept Jesus in a matter of moments. However, he already believed in a Supreme Being; he already had a general concept of God's plan of salvation; he knew about sin. All he needed was to be brought face to face with Jesus as the Messiah. The process was well underway before Paul went to Damascus.

Contrast Paul's situation with that of someone who doesn't even believe in the Bible or in God. It does little good to urge an atheist to "give his heart to the Lord." He's back on step 1 of the progression outlined earlier in this article, and we're trying to rush him to step 6. Many zealous Christians, oblivious to where a person is, in this progression, have unnecessarily made themselves and the Gospel look ridiculous by their hard sell, prepackaged approach. In fact, many non-Christians are extremely sensitive about being witnessed to. I once said to a salesman, "Can I ask you a question?" He replied, "Let's see, usually when people ask that, they want to know if I've been saved."

Some Christians have been told to keep their religion to themselves, after opening a Bible in a public place. These people (those doing the telling) have been sensitized by insensitive soul-grabbers with "canned" witnessing presentations.

Because conversion is a process, we need to be very aware of where a person is spiritually before we begin to evangelize. The Apostle Paul set an excellent example for us. He became "all things to all men!"

"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law To those not having the law I became like one not having the law To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some,"

I Corinthians 9:20-23.

Part of the challenge of personal evangelism is to really get to know people and to minister to them where they are.

Because conversion is a process, you generally can't unload the whole message of

the Gospel at one time. In most situations you will only be able to plant a seed, which will take time to germinate and grow. Others may plant more seeds and water. Still others may reap the harvest, long after you are out of the picture. You may reap the harvest, but it is really God's. Remember to proclaim God's word, not yours. It is God who must grant the increase. You must simply have faith that the seeds you plant will germinate. In due season they will bear fruit, for Him.

Personal Needs

Individuals with whom you might want to share the Gospel have various needs, but not all are felt at a given point in time. Their minds will tend to screen out those things that don't pertain to their personal needs.

All people have a need to know Jesus Christ, to be forgiven their sins, to be unburdened from the load of guilt they carry. However, if they don't feel these needs, you will have little success trying to fill them. Your words will go right over their heads!

The challenge in personal evangelism is to love people enough to learn what needs they are feeling, and to show how the Gospel fills those needs.

If they feel lonely, show how Jesus can become a companion.

If they feel hurt, show how God can help them bear the pain.

If they struggle with sickness, show them how Jesus provides comfort and balm for suffering.

If they are feeling weakness, show them how God can provide strength.

It's easy for people to feel physical needs and to desire only physical, materialistic solutions; many preachers today proclaim a gospel of physical health and wealth. However, complete obedience to God's laws does bring blessings; the primary message of the Gospel is a spiritual, eternal one. All people of faith in the Bible eventually died, many in an untimely fashion; many suffered terribly during their lives; but all looked forward to eternal life in God's kingdom. That promise is the heart of the Gospel.

Pray for Love, Wisdom, Courage

Because we can't possibly know all we should about personal evangelism and the needs of the people we talk to, we need the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Specifically, we need love, wisdom, and courage.

We need love because it must be the overriding motivation for personal evangelism. We must care deeply about others and want to see them translated from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God. Love must shine through to others so that they sense that they're really being loved, and not that they're being preached at or recruited.

We need wisdom to know when and how to evangelize. Pray for wisdom to know what needs a person is feeling, where he/she is relative to conversion; pray for the right words to effectively minister to their needs.

We need courage to speak. So often we have opportunities, but we're afraid of being embarrassed, of making a fool out of ourselves, or simply of striking up a conversation with a stranger. It's always easier to say nothing. Pray for courage to speak up when you have the opportunity.

After you have shared a part of God's truth with someone, pray that the Holy Spirit will work with his mind, that the seed you've planted will germinate and that God will send other people to help it grow.

God Must Call

It is certain that God must call a person before he can ever come to repentance. Jesus said plainly, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day," **John 6:44**. No amount of human wisdom can open the mind of another person. Unfortunately, some Christians have used this fact as an excuse not to evangelize. They reason that God is going to call whom He wants when He's ready, so there's no need to exert any effort to share the Gospel.

Needless to say, God does use human instruments. Chances are you were led to know Jesus Christ, at least partially, through the ministry of another human being. God can certainly call people in a variety of ways, but the vast majority have been introduced to the Gospel through other people. Witness the thousands converted on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2:41**; witness the Samaritans converted through the preaching of Philip, **Acts 8:6**; witness the Ethiopian eunuch, **Acts 8:26-40**. Witness Paul's question in **Romans 10:14**:

"And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

There is no doubt that God must open a person's mind before he can be converted. However, God gives us the privilege, He gives us the duty, to sow seeds of truth, some of which will germinate and bear fruit. If we neglect to sow those seeds, God will use other persons or other methods, but we lose out on the opportunity to love our neighbor in the greatest possible sense, sharing with them the greatest gift of all, the Gospel.

Radiating Total Security

From time to time I have had conversations with members of groups who think that theirs is the one true Church, that they have the exclusive or primary revelation of God's truth — that God is dealing only or primarily through their group or their leader. These people exude such a sense of peace and security; they are so sure, so confident. They know and know that they know, and it shows in their conversations.

Such confidence is contagious. Others see it and are drawn to it. They want to be secure.

They want to be part of such a body of true believers so as to escape from doubt, anxiety and uncertainty. They will even accept all kinds of far-out doctrines and practices in order to obtain that sense of security.

I remember back during the early years of my ministry when I was part of such a one-true-church. I must have exuded supreme confidence in my work, because many times people said to me, "I wish I could have your faith." Of course, my faith was in the organization as much as in God. I did not distinguish between the two because I firmly believed that the organization was God's end-time work on earth. Of course, in time God showed me the difference between the two; and when I was forced to reject the organization, I was able to continue my relationship with God.

My point is this: If people can radiate such an aura of confidence in a group or in a human guru, why can't Christians do the same for Jesus Christ? Of all people on earth, we should be confident. We should be true believers. We should radiate security and serenity, so much so, that those around us find themselves drawn to it. Of course, we're still human; we do have to fight discouragement. On the whole, our lives should stand as beacons of confidence in an age of uncertainty.

I think it's a mistake for Christians to fall into the trap of dwelling on the economic,

political, and military uncertainties in our world. Certainly, we should be aware of world problems; but our primary focus should be on the certainty of how it's all going to turn out. We should radiate absolute confidence in the future of the world and in our personal future. We know what lies ahead. We've read the last chapter of the Book. We know that all the kingdoms of men will become the kingdom of Christ!

We need to radiate this confidence and assurance to all. Let us be the ones who draw others to God through the confidence we have in Him and in His plan for us and the world.

The Challenge of Personal Evangelism

In **Acts 8:4** is recorded the account of an early persecution against the church in Jerusalem, with many of the brethren being scattered: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

The evangelistic zeal of the early Christians caused the Church to grow very rapidly — until it had reached practically every corner of the Roman Empire.

In stark contrast to this record, the modern churches, particularly in North America and in Western Europe, particularly among Sabbath-keepers, experience very little growth — a few per cent per year. A hard look at this growth reveals that even these minimal figures are not always what they seem to be. Much of the growth is not really evangelism at all but "brand switching" — the new members of one church are the lost members of another. Real evangelism, turning someone from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, is rare. In our affluent world, we have lost the zeal of the persecuted Christians described in **Acts 8:4**.

Why So Little Evangelism?

There are many reasons and excuses for the low level of evangelism. I've heard many and used some myself: "It's easy to get people to come to church on Sunday, but the Sabbath doctrine is too hard for people to accept." "God has to call people." "I don't believe in 'cheap grace.'" "All the other churches lead them to Christ, our job is to teach them true doctrines." "We're not called to evangelize but to teach." "We don't want to be like all the other Protestants." "We're interested in growth in quality, not in numbers."

The theology that says this is not the *only*

day of salvation, that there will come a future opportunity for the vast majority of humanity to know the Savior, takes away a lot of the pressure to preach the Gospel now. Compare this with the theology that says that this is the only day of salvation — and if your neighbor isn't saved now, he will suffer never-ending torment in hell. A negative motivation to be sure, but motivation, nevertheless.

Another factor has to do with expectations. People tend to do what [they feel] is expected of them. Jehovah's Witnesses expect their members to go knocking on doors. So what do they do? They knock on doors — and grow. Mormons expect young men to devote a couple of years to missionary work. So what happens? Young men are out knocking on doors — and they grow. Some churches expect and teach their people to pay and pray — and that's what happens.

Too many of us have come to expect no evangelism. So guess what? There is no evangelism. Even though there are many of us (all of us, to one degree or another) who have a gift of evangelism, our negative expectations put the lid on that gift. Exactly the opposite of what should be happening! Paul exhorted Timothy, "... stir up the gift of god, which is in thee..." (**II Timothy 1:6**). The gift of personal evangelism needs to be stirred up, not quashed!

Uncertainty About What the Gospel Is!

If the bugler blows an indistinct call on the bugle, the troops won't know whether they are supposed to advance, retreat, or chow down! If the Church doesn't know precisely what its mission is, it will stand still and begin going backwards. If it doesn't know precisely what the Gospel is, other gospels will emerge. This is exactly what is happening in our society. To some the Gospel is the truth about the *true* Jesus of the Bible as opposed to the *false* Jesus of church traditions. To some it is personal success and happiness through Jesus Christ. To some it is warning the nation of God's wrath. To some it is restoring the *full* gospel. To some it is restoring the pure religion God gave to ancient Israel. To some it is a message about health and wealth, blessings that come through obedience to God. Some want to preach a gospel of spiritual experience; some a gospel of obedience to laws; some a gospel that does not offend the rational mind of Western man.

Perhaps the differences among some of

these gospels seem subtle; but the differences are real enough to create uncertainty. Many Christians are not sure what to share with their neighbors. Is it the true doctrines, the Sabbath, the impending doom on our nation, or the laws of God? Their uncertainty results in inactivity. They share nothing, or what they do share is diluted by what others share.

The Apostle Paul made it clear that there is one true Gospel. “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” (**I Corinthians 2:2**).

This Gospel is too simple for some; too “Protestant” for others. It is the simplicity of the Gospel that turns a child of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

There may be some truth in all the gospels mentioned above; and certainly there is something to be said for the pursuit of truth. Apollos is an example of a man quite able to hold his own in theological discussions and disputes about true doctrines. He was an eloquent man. But all his efforts had one focus: “Proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (**Acts 18:24-28**). Today, we can devote tremendous amounts of time and energy to discovering Biblical truth — all the while ignoring our neighbor who is floundering in the world of spiritual darkness!

If the Church of Jesus Christ is to effectively carry on the commission given originally to the Apostles — to preach the Gospel to all nations, it must focus on *the* Gospel, the only true Gospel, probably best summarized in **John 3:16**: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

If we really love the world, if we love our neighbors as God does, we must feel some urge to share with them the greatest truth of all — the truth about the Messiah, and the opportunity to be in His kingdom.

Love Must Motivate

There are many forces that can motivate one to preach the Gospel. We can evangelize because of guilt — believing that it will be our fault if we don’t try to rescue our neighbors from an ever-burning hell fire. We can do it because of desire for reward — we want a brighter, bigger crown at the resurrection; or because we want the praise of fellow Christians. We can do it because it’s expected of us, because it’s our job, or to get a paycheck

(**I Timothy 3:3; Philippians 1:15-17**). But these are the wrong reasons.

Our primary motivation should be love! We should care so much about other people, as potential sons of God, that we want to see them there with us, standing before Jesus Christ on that great day!

Personal Evangelism

There are many ways to evangelize. Very popular today are the impersonal media of radio, TV and print. But, time and time again, surveys show that the most effective evangelism is personal. People talking to people!

Personal evangelism, as I’m presenting it, is not about knocking on doors (though that’s great for those who are so motivated); it’s not about passing out tracts on street corners (which is also fine). What it is about is you, as an individual, in your daily contact with family, friends, co-workers, in a very natural, and sincere way, sharing the truth about what Jesus Christ can do in individual lives.

Vitally important to personal evangelism is the example of your life. All that you say and do, or don’t say and don’t do, reflects on Jesus Christ. Without saying a word, you *are* a witness. Unfortunately, all too many Christians, by their impatience, unkindness, intolerance, and selfishness are poor witnesses! My prayer is that your life will shine as a light on a hill!

But personal evangelism involves going a step beyond the example you set. It involves speaking about the hope that lies within you, about Jesus Christ, about the Gospel; it involves planting seeds of good news in the minds of those around you — seeds that will germinate in the minds of those whom God is calling. Evangelism is greatly affected by your personal witness. If you are a poor example, your evangelism will be ineffective at best. At worst, it can make the Savior you proclaim a stench in the nostrils of those who see that your actions are different from your words. This doesn’t mean you have to be perfect before you can evangelize. It simply means you must be doing your best, while admitting your failures, to live according to God’s ways.

A Practical Program

Here is a practical program to help you begin, very naturally and gradually, to practice personal evangelism. You can use it as an

individual. But it will be much more effective if you employ it in conjunction with others — with your Sabbath School class, Bible study group, or Sabbath fellowship. You can use it in cooperation with people of different churches, because it focuses on sharing Jesus Christ, not on doctrines, church organizations, or traditions.

1. *Create a climate for personal evangelism.* Create an atmosphere that encourages those with the gift of evangelism to understand and use it. This can be accomplished by preaching on the subject (if you're a preacher), by reading books and articles about it, praying about it and discussing it with others of like mind. The vast majority of Christians can/should be evangelizing to a much greater degree than they are. With encouragement and training they can do it very effectively.

2. *Learn to recognize opportunities for personal evangelism.* Far too many of us realize opportunities for evangelizing only after they are past. For example, my wife had a conversation with a Roman Catholic neighbor who was talking about the challenges she faced in teaching Sunday School. It was a perfect opportunity to ask a question like, "What do you teach in Sunday School about repentance from sins and accepting Jesus as Savior?" Once I was talking to a former member of a Church I used to pastor. She had drifted away from God altogether and commented that if her son went to Vacation Bible School and heard about Jesus, he would likely ask, "Jesus who?" It was a perfect opportunity for me to have asked, "Well, what do you believe about Jesus?"

Of course, these openings for sowing seeds of the Gospel were gone before we recognized them as such. But now, with patience and effort, we're beginning to see opportunities as they present themselves — and to take advantage of them before they are gone.

Learn to identify opportunities — whether during or afterwards. Eventually, with prayer, with increased awareness and expectation, and with God's help, you'll be able to recognize them as they occur.

3. *Talk regularly with others about opportunities for evangelism.* Talk about opportunities missed; and opportunities taken. Share your experiences so that others may learn from them. Listen to others' experiences and learn from them. Ask others for suggestions about how to handle given

situations. If possible, do some role-playing to practice talking about your faith and about the basic message of salvation.

In our local Bible studies, we have begun devoting a small portion of time *at every meeting* to talking about evangelism. It helps us look outward! It reminds us of one of our primary missions as a body! It raises our consciousness about opportunities and helps prepare us to meet them.

4. *Pray daily about personal evangelism.* *Pray for love, wisdom, courage!* Pray for God to give you deep love for those who don't have a personal relationship with Him. Pray for wisdom in knowing how to plant seeds in their minds. Pray for the courage to plant those seeds when the opportunities arise.

5. *Find tools that can be used in personal evangelism.* Build up a supply of tracts, booklets, books and cassette tapes that can be used as appropriate in your personal evangelism. [See list at the end of these articles.]

6. *Begin to evangelize.*

7. *Share your experiences with others to encourage them.*

There's no magic in this. It's something virtually all of us can do, but most of us don't.

Yet, if we did, the growth of the Church would be so much greater than it is. Some churches spend millions of dollars on mass media evangelism — for growth rates of a few per cent. A small group of people evangelizing on a personal basis can do so much more with virtually no money. If only one out of five members of your fellowship evangelizes and is instrumental in bringing one person to Christ in a year; and if only one out of five of those new Christians seeks to fellowship with you, your group will be growing at 4% a year — which is almost as fast as the fastest growing major denominations in the U.S., which are spending millions of dollars.

To be sure, our concern is not numbers for the sake of numbers, growth for the sake of growth. Rather, our concern is love for individuals who don't know their Lord and Savior. The challenge for us, as individuals, is to zealously share with those around us the blessing of salvation through Jesus Christ. Just like the early Christians scattered by persecution, let us go everywhere sharing the good news with others.

—written by Richard A. Wiedenheft, Bible quotations in this article are from NIV. Ω

Study No. 114

What Others Are Doing

I Corinthians 12 presents a great challenge to the people of the Almighty. It says that each member of the Church of God has a spiritual gift to further the body of the Messiah. We often act as if this is not true. By our actions, we say, “the minister alone has the gifts of the spirit, our function is merely to pay and pray.” As a result, the growth in numbers of the Church of God has been stagnant. The current scattered condition of Sabbath-keepers in general is the result of not taking the “bull by the horns” and helping others learn God’s Word.

The early New Testament Church was not merely a “pay and pray” group. Following the persecution of Saul against the Church in Jerusalem, the disciples were scattered abroad, and “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word,” **Acts 8:4**. The *whole Church* was involved in preaching the word, not just ordained ministers.

And so today, a few understand these basic Bible principles, and are doing something about it.

At a Feast of Tabernacles, we met Don Young and his wife Nina. Don is a former elder of the Worldwide Church of God, and was baptized in 1959. The Youngs are doing something about their religious beliefs. They are putting them into practice personally, and are sharing their beliefs with others. Don writes articles about basic tenets of our faith, and places them as an advertisement in his local newspaper in Lexington, Kentucky. He has had several positive responses. (If interested in placing ads in local newspapers, follow the suggestions given by the Bible Sabbath Association, www.biblesabbath.org. See their free article, “Reaching Out Through Local Advertising.”)

In a Bible Study at the Feast, Mr. Young explained why he writes and publishes these articles. When he was first converted, Don explains, he wanted so much to help others learn the Truth. Satan wants us to lose our first love and be dormant, but the Eternal wants us alive and fruitful. While some criticize him for trying to start his own church, the reality is, Don is trying to help others with God’s Truth. It was the same in Jesus’ day. Some of His disciples objected to others casting out demons in the Savior’s name. “You can’t do that!” they were saying. However, our Master refused to forbid them from doing this, **Luke 9:49-50**. Philip was a *mere* deacon, yet he was moved by God’s Spirit to do a mighty work for Him, **Acts 8:4-12**.

Mr. Young has noted that the Sabbaths, weekly and annual, are to be *proclaimed* in their season, **Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37**. “Proclaim” means “to herald, preach, teach, give out to others.” Therefore, before the Holy Days, he places newspaper advertisements proclaiming the annual and weekly Sabbaths, so that others can understand their importance. The Holy Days proclaim Christ and the gospel. If one proclaims the Holy Days, he is proclaiming the Gospel, for it is the same thing. Satan wants the salt of the earth, the light of the world, to be hidden or covered up. The truth is that all members of God’s Church are responsible for proclaiming the Truth, **Matthew 9:37-38**.

What a ridiculous scene it would be if there was a great field to be harvested, and there were 2,002 workers to harvest it, but only two of them went into the field to harvest, while the other 2,000 stayed outside praying them on. Jesus sent His disciples out to preach — *before* they had the Holy Spirit! **Luke 9:59-62, 10:1-2**. Most of us don’t realize we are to be laborers for God, and not only payers and prayers. Read the story of the woman of Samaria, who did a great work for God, **John 4:1-42**.

In conclusion, Mr. Young exhorted us to be a “burning and shining light,” like John the Baptist, **John 5:35**. We are not to be a hidden light, unseen by the world. We need to clean up our own houses before we can share our light with others. Are we the salt of the earth, or have we lost our savor? Let us apply **Matthew 25:37-46** in the spiritual sense, as well as the physical sense. There are many spiritually hungry and thirsty people out there who need to be given the Truth. Are we going to respond to them, or are we going to selfishly claim it is not our responsibility? Let us be profitable servants of Him, **Luke 17:5-10**.

The Youngs have placed several advertisements in the Lexington, Kentucky, newspaper as well as *The Journal*. “Proclaiming God’s

Sabbath Feasts,” explains why the Sabbaths and Holy Days are important. “Why Christ Died,” shows the relationship between our Savior’s death and the Commandments of God. “Christmas — Justified Idolatry,” proclaims basic Gospel truths.

Of course, Mr. Young has his critics. His style may perhaps be too blunt, and could turn off some individuals. However, I congratulate him on what he is doing, and wish that others would make a similar effort. Publishing God’s Truth in the local newspaper is not for everyone. Nor is it the only way to spread the Gospel. It is, however, a proper activity for some.

Are you prepared to respond to questions and work with people who are convicted by the Truth you present? A mature person who has been in the Church for years should be able to do so, but not everyone is so gifted. The point is, God has given each and every one of us spiritual gifts, and we should discover and use these gifts from God!

Some may say there are no fruits from Mr. Young’s activity. It is too soon to tell. If we do no more than Noah did, we have done a great work. He was a preacher of righteousness, **II Peter 2:5**, yet only his family was saved. If only one person is helped, then all the effort is worth it.

A Communist Looks at Christianity

“The Gospel is a much more powerful weapon for the renewal of society than is our Marxist philosophy. All the same, it is we who will finally beat you. We are only a handful and you Christians are numbered by the millions We Communists . . . are determined to achieve our object and we know how to obtain the means. Of our salaries and wages we keep only what is strictly necessary; we give up the rest for propaganda purposes; to this propaganda we also consecrate all our free time and part of our holidays.

“You, however, give only a little time and hardly any money for the spreading of the Gospel of Christ. How can anyone believe in the supreme value of this Gospel if you do not practice it. If you do not spread it, and if you

sacrifice neither time nor money for it?

“Believe me, it is we who will win, for we believe in our Communist message and we are ready to sacrifice everything, even our life in order that social justice shall triumph. But you people are afraid to soil your hands.” From *Paix et Liberte*, a French Communist publication.

Nigerians Proclaim Sabbaths

One group of people who is low on funds, but high on fervent energy, is Nigerian Sabbath-keepers. I have been amazed at how zealous many of them are for God’s Truth. Sure, there are impostors and charlatans there, as in other parts of the world. But, there are also zealous dedicated workers who faithfully persevere, in spite of financial difficulties and hardships of living in a Moslem-dominated country hostile to Christianity.

How the Nigerian Church of God keeps the festivals puts many American Sabbath-keepers to shame. Even during the spring festivals, they have hours of daily Bible Studies, recreational activities, evangelistic meetings, and festive meals. They plan these spiritual activities long in advance, and every festival has some time devoted to proclaiming God’s Sabbaths to others. We are called to be servants of others, not spiritual hermits and isolationists. Our faith should result in *action*, a life well-lived, not just a creed of *belief*. May true believers everywhere exhibit these zealous characteristics.

Those of you who may wish to contact Nigerian Sabbath-keepers, see the Nigerian representatives for Giving & Sharing.

The late John Ajalli, of Nigeria, wrote several articles published by Giving & Sharing. He was always thankful for books, Bibles and articles for distribution to others. But as he said, God will do the work **He** wants done, no matter whether **we** support it or not. The Creator will fulfill the prophecy of **Matthew 24:14**. Every believer should help further the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations. We love His Truth, and are thankful we can have a small part in sharing that Truth with others. Ω

Know Much, Do Little?

(The following letter is reproduced from the February, 1992, *Good Tidings*, a monthly paper published by the Bible Truth Program, Stanberry, Missouri.)

I will venture to say, and I truly believe it, 98% of people who read the Bible do just that — read! Mostly out of duty.

I would say 50% of people who were “raised in the faith” as I was, do the same. For 25 years after I was baptized, I did. Yes, I usually went over the Sabbath School lesson and normally that was the extent of my Bible reading.

I have attended Church of God services all over Oregon, Idaho, California, Missouri, Kansas, Alaska and Washington. During Sabbath School lessons, individuals seldom speak out in a general discussion. Some visit, some write letters and cards. Yes, that is in Church of God services.

First day preachers send out booklets and books and go to great lengths to explain just exactly what they believe. They have a terrific following because of the loving way they take time to write and explain the scriptures.

I know two young ministers in the Church of God who have pulled out and now are first day. Strong! It is just sickening. *We claim to have the truth and know so much, and then do little about it.*

The reason I can say that is — look at our church progress and mission outreach. One church a member of my family moved to recently, they were told, had not had a new member (except member’s children or grandchildren) in five years. Oh my, I was really shocked, actually horrified. There has to be something radically wrong with the pastors and the members.

I am not, I hope, being too critical. I know some are good workers for the Lord, but I am so eager to see the truth spread. There’s got to be a better way to spread the truth than we in the Church of God have done in the past 50 years. Time is running out. I wonder if the story of the Ten Virgins was trying to tell the Church of God 50% of us would be lost? God help us. — A Concerned Reader Ω

Reach Out and Touch Someone

The famous Michelangelo painting on the Sistine Chapel shows the Creator touching His finger to Adam’s finger, giving him the spark of life. There is tremendous significance to the physical act of touching someone. The Savior touched many people out of compassion, and healed them. Today with the electronic marvel of telecommunications, we can touch someone across the country, and across the world. How many people do we lovingly touch today?

In the New Testament, the Greek word for “touch” is *haptomai*, Strong’s #680, which means “to attach oneself to.”

People Wanted To Touch Savior

People realized that the Master was their Healer. They wanted to touch Him and be healed. The woman with an issue of blood merely wanted to touch His garment. She knew she would be healed if she did, **Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48.** Virtue, spiritual power, went out of Jesus when she was healed.

The men of Gennesaret gathered up the

sick to be touched and healed by the Great Physician, **Matthew 14:34-36.** People pressed upon Him to touch Him in order to be healed of their plagues, **Mark 3:10; Luke 6:19.** As many as touched Him were made whole, **Mark 6:56.** A blind man wanted the Savior to touch him so that he would receive his sight, **Mark 8:22-26.** Parents wanted Jesus to touch their young children, **Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15.**

Jesus Wanted to Touch People

Out of compassion, Jesus touched an “untouchable” leper and healed him, **Matthew 8:1-3; Mark 1:40-42; Luke 5:12-13**. Jesus touched Peter’s wife’s mother, and her fever left her, **Matthew 8:14-15**. Compassion again was His motive when He touched and healed two blind men, **Matthew 9:27-29, 20:30-34**. Jesus touched His fearful disciples to comfort them, **Matthew 17:5-8**. He touched the tongue of a deaf man with a speech impediment and cured him, **Mark 7:32-35**. The Master touched the coffin of a young man, who arose, **Luke 7:11-16**. And in one of His last miracles during His earthly ministry, Jesus touched the high priest’s servant’s ear which Peter had lopped off, restoring it whole, **Luke 22:50-51**.

Satan Doesn’t Want You to Touch Others; He Wants to Touch You!

Ascetics try to get you to touch not, taste not, and follow other commandments of men, **Colossians 2:20-23**. In other words, be a spiritual hermit. Many today are following this evil path.

The Pharisees wouldn’t “touch” so-called “sinners,” yet they wouldn’t serve others either! **Luke 7:36-50**.

If we do not love our spiritual brothers by having fellowship with them and serving their needs, then we are not of God, and Satan can get hold of — touch — us, **I John** entire epistle, including **5:18**.

Sometimes it is good not to touch a woman (have sexual relations in a proper marriage), **I Corinthians 7:1**. God wants us to be separate from unbelievers and idolatry. “Touch not the unclean thing,” **II Corinthians 6:14-18**.

Fellowship Is Touching Others

A major way we are called to touch others, especially those of the household of faith, is to have fellowship with them. And yet today there are many who shirk this God-given responsibility. They hold back from reaching out and touching someone else.

Here are a few examples of how some don’t touch others like they should. There are “proud” people who won’t come to the annual Sabbath feasts, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles because they say they don’t have enough

second tithe to travel to meet with others of like faith. Yet often they will not make their needs known, nor will they accept gifts from others who have excess funds. They withdraw themselves for unscriptural reasons.

Then there are those who won’t communicate with their brethren. A first class letter and long distance telephone call are very inexpensive, yet some people won’t write or call a spiritual brother as often as they should, or even at all. They are seldom “in the mood” to communicate with others.

Fellowship is NOT Optional

Once a person is called in the spiritual brotherhood of the Messiah, the Church, fellowship with other spiritual brothers is definitely not an option. Fellowship is a command from the Eternal!

Yet across the world, many professed true believers are holding back from touching others. They are ignoring scriptures that cannot be misinterpreted.

“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name,” **Malachi 3:16**.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke [inspire, encourage] unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,” **Hebrews 10:23-25**.

Fellowship is not an optional choice. It is a requirement for every follower of the Eternal. Fellowship is “the right choice.”

Reach Out and Touch Someone

How can the isolated believer fulfill the scriptural requirement for fellowship with others of like faith? Today it is very easy. Write a letter or call others. (E-mail is free, but usually not the best medium for personal communication.) Communication marvels are inexpensive and easy to use. We should use them to touch others in a positive way.

Competition in telephone service has resulted in lower long distance rates. International telephone calls during non-prime time are surprisingly inexpensive. Imagine our

thrill one morning to receive a call from a friend in Tasmania, Australia!

If you can't afford even these nominal amounts, and want us to call you, please let us know. We would love to hear from you. Keep in contact with your brethren. Write letters. Reach out and touch someone. You will be

fulfilling the instructions of the Almighty. You will be blessed yourself and be a blessing to others.

Call us at 307-686-5191. The best time is Friday night or Sabbath.

— written by Richard C. Nickels Ω
Study No. 112

Parable of the Fishless Fishermen

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Year after year these who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing.

Continually they searched for new and better definitions of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing and to promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters." The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however; they didn't fish.

They organized a board to send out fishermen to where there were many fish. The board was formed by those who had the great vision and courage to speak about fishing, to define fishing, and to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived.

Also the board hired staffs and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the staff and committee members did not fish. Expensive training centers were built to teach fishermen how to fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology, but the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, graduates were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters filled with fish.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. A speaker's bureau was also provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded, and were sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home, they never fished.

Some also said they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen.

After one stirring meeting on "The Necessity for Fishing," a young fellow left the meeting and went fishing.

The next day he reported he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it.

So he quit his fishing in order to have time to tell about the experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience. Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished.

They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?"

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who didn't catch fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish?

— from *Battle Cry*, published by **Chick Publications, PO Box 3500, Ontario, CA 91761-1100.** Ω

Tracts for Personal Evangelism

Order from: **Church of God, Sabbath Day, PO Box 1645, Springdale, AR 72765-1645**
Tom Justus, Phone: 479-751-9535, E-Mail: Justus4779@aol.com

You may order single copies, or bulk copies for local distribution. Printed booklets are 3 and 5/8 inches by 9 inches, with space for your Church address. Donations to cover cost of printing are gratefully accepted, but not necessary. This is a labor of love!

- [] **“The Resurrection Was NOT on Sunday!”** Was Jesus three days and three nights in the grave, as He said in Matthew 12:40? Can you figure three days and three nights between sunset Good Friday and sunrise Easter Sunday?
- [] **“Lazarus and The Rich Man”** Do people burn forever in a hellfire? Do saved mothers up in heaven see the writhing and hear the shrieks of their own lost children down in hell?
- [] **“Kingdom of God! . . . What Does That Mean to You?”** Is it the CHURCH? Is it something “set up in the hearts of men”? Is it the British Empire? Is it “the Good within you”? Is it “the millennium”?
- [] **“Why Do You Observe Sunday?”** The Bible teaches the observance of the Sabbath! Which day did Christ and the Apostles observe? Which day did Paul teach gentile converts to observe? How did the day of worship become changed from the seventh to the first day of the week?
- [] **“The Key to the Book of Revelation”** Apocalypse of Mystery? What is the meaning of the book? What are: The Seven Seals, The Four Horsemen, The Mark of the Beast, The Image of the Beast, Armageddon, The Last Seven Plagues?
- [] **“Just What Do You Mean . . . BORN AGAIN?”** Don’t be too sure you know! Many religious people talk about being “born again” — yet they don’t really know what Christ meant by those words. The TRUTH is surprising!
- [] **“What Kind of FAITH is Required for SALVATION?”** Do you know?
- [] **“How Often Should We Partake of the Lord’s Supper?”** The LORD’S SUPPER, like so many essential points of the original true doctrine, has fallen into the mire of erroneous tradition.
- [] **“Predestination . . . Does the Bible Teach It?”** Is your ultimate fate decided for you in advance?
- [] **“What do you Mean . . . SALVATION?”** Do you realize not one in a hundred knows what it is — how to get it — when you receive it? Don’t be sure you do!
- [] **“The Plain Truth About Christmas”** Where did we get Christmas? . . . from the Bible, or paganism? Here are astonishing FACTS which may shock you! Do you know the origin of the Christmas tree — of “Santa Claus” — of the mistletoe, holly-wreath, — custom of exchanging gifts?
- [] **“Why Were You BORN?”** Do you really know why you were born? Do you realize God has a purpose being worked out?
- [] **“Easter . . . Is It Christian?”** What do rabbits laying colored eggs have to do with the Resurrection of Christ?
- [] **“Where Did Halloween Come From?”** Do you know Halloween was celebrated by pagans centuries before the New Testament Church was founded?
- [] **“Where Are Enoch and Elijah?”** Enoch was translated that he should not see death. Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Yet the Bible reveals they are not in heaven today! Where are they?
- [] **“God’s Holy Days”** Did you know that God has Holy Days that reveal His plan of salvation? Man has substituted his holidays, Christmas, Easter, New Year’s Day, and many more for God’s Holy Days. Because of this, man has lost sight of God’s wonderful plan of Salvation and man’s true destiny!
- [] **“Bible Correspondence Course”** 32 lessons.